

from the Mayor...May 2013

Our state legislators finished their business last Friday evening in Indianapolis. Before we discuss that, I just want to plug the Warsaw City Hall Open House on Saturday, May 11, from 10 am to 1 pm. We are excited for everyone to see their new city building. We are very proud of it and I know you will be as well.

This year I had the opportunity to work with Representatives Kubacki, Wolkins, Hueur, Senator Mishler, and other representatives to advance issues that affect us locally. Political blogs consume barrels of ink and reams of paper analyzing outcomes. While that is not my intention, I do want to give an update of issues that directly affect our city and thank our local representatives for the hard work they put into their jobs. I know they are approached by many different interests (IACT-Indiana Association of Cities and Towns for one, of which I am a member) and cannot always meet everyone's needs. For the most part, they understand our community and represent us well.

Road funding was a high priority for cities, towns, and counties in this session. I am thrilled to report that Hoosier roads will realize an additional \$215 million in funding in each of the next two years. This increase was primarily the result of the reallocation of gasoline tax revenue from non-transportation use directly to the repair of local roads and streets.

Also, for the first time, a portion of sales tax revenue will be allocated to road repair as well. This action did not increase the pump price; rather, it redistributed it to local roads and streets. These revenues took a big hit in the last decade. In fact, one study in 2009 estimated it would take \$800 million to repair one half of all the county roads that were in need of repair. In summary, the reallocation of gas tax dollars back to local streets (which it was originally intended for!) was the right thing to do. Will it be enough?

I personally testified for the regulation of Ephedrine and Pseudoephedrine (PSE) at the statehouse. The bill awaiting the governor's signature reduces the amount of PSE an individual may purchase in a year. It also prohibits those convicted of meth offenses from possessing PSE. Is this legislation enough? No (see "from the Mayor... February, 2013). Is it a step in the right direction? Yes. We ask that all pharmacies support the new tamper-resistant PSE. These new drugs are as effective as PSE for the cold and allergy sufferers but chokes off the "cookers" from crystalizing meth.

There were a few other changes (or things left unchanged) to pass along. Redevelopment commissions will continue to function as a major tool for cities to promote and invest in economic development activities. The legislature limited the authority of cities and towns to regulate and inspect rental properties. The disposition process of abandoned properties that do not sell at a tax sale was

streamlined to facilitate disposal of such property to a group or individual that will repair and maintain the property.

While it seemed that the issues weren't quite as divisive this session as in the past, the work to do what is best for everyone in our state requires much effort and compromise by our lawmakers as well as the necessity to accept and move ahead. It's not an easy job.